

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 172
By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. J. Donald M. Gass of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. J. Donald M. Gass; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gass was not only an exemplary physician, author, teacher, and consummate professional, but also worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Donald Gass was an eminent ophthalmologist, highly respected by his peers in the medical community who regarded him as the premier retina specialist in the world; in 1999, a poll of 33,000 ophthalmologists around the world recognized him as one of the ten most influential ophthalmologists of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, born on Prince Edward Island, Canada, to the late Dr. and Mrs. R. S. Gass, Donald Gass was raised in Nashville, Tennessee, attended Hillsboro High School, and received an undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University in 1950; the former Middle Tennessee Chest Disease Hospital in Nashville was named for his father, a tuberculosis specialist; and

WHEREAS, following his graduation, Donald Gass married his high school sweetheart, Margy Ann Loser, and served for three years as a line officer in the United States Navy during the Korean War; he returned to Vanderbilt University and received his medical degree in 1957, in the process earning the Founder's Medal for the highest academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gass completed his internship at the University of Iowa, a residency in ophthalmology at the Wilmer Institute of The Johns Hopkins Hospital and then a fellowship in ophthalmic pathology at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, Dr. Donald Gass joined the faculty of the newly formed Bascom Palmer Eye Institute of the University of Miami School of Medicine where his distinguished

career combined patient care with clinical research and teaching; highly regarded and beloved by his students, Dr. Gass was the recipient of the University of Miami's Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award in 1989, and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute honored him with an endowed chair; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, Dr. Gass returned to the Vanderbilt School of Medicine and was later named Professor Emeritus in the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual sciences; Vanderbilt University had recently honored him with an endowed chair and an honor lecture in his name. Following his retirement in 2003, Dr. Gass continued to lecture and attend conferences for some time; and

WHEREAS, a prolific writer in his field, Dr. Gass was the author of such authoritative works as *Stereoscopic Atlas of Macular Diseases: A Fundoscopic and Angiographic Presentation* and *Differential Diagnosis of Intraocular Tumors: a Stereoscopic Presentation*; he also authored twelve book chapters and over 270 articles in peer-reviewed journals, many of which are considered landmark contributions; and

WHEREAS, recognized for his preeminence in the diagnosis and treatment of macular diseases, Dr. Donald Gass received innumerable honors and awards, and was cited for outstanding achievement by almost every major professional organization in ophthalmology and by numerous academic institutions in the United States and abroad; honors not already mentioned include the 1987 establishment of the Gass Medal by the Macular Society as well as a Macular Society lectureship, the Mildred Weisenfeld Award for Excellence in Ophthalmology in 1999 from the American Association for Research and Vision in Ophthalmology, the Helen Keller Prize for Vision Research in 2001, the Laureate Recognition Award of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in 2004, and the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2004; and

WHEREAS, it is impossible to overstate Dr. Gass's contributions in his field including his work in angiography that helped to visualize the retina and create distinctions among diseases, his pioneering work in classification that allowed other researchers to develop treatments that preserved the vision of tens of thousands of people, and his observation of the swelling of the macula that occurs after cataract surgery now known as the Irvine-Gass syndrome; and

WHEREAS, according to Dennis M. O'Day, M.D., Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, "When [Dr. Gass] began his work in the early 1960s, the tools he had to work with were primitive or non-existent, yet he opened up the field so effectively with his discoveries that it became attractive to a whole new cohort of other bright minds, many of whom he trained and who now continue his work."; and

WHEREAS, in spite of the fact that he changed the course of ophthalmology in the latter half of the twentieth century and was justly recognized nationally and internationally for his influential role in his field, Dr. Donald Gass remained a modest, humble man who was genuinely uncomfortable with public recognition; the grace, dignity and humility of his final days were consistent with the manner in which he lived his entire life; and

WHEREAS, an active and devout member of the Christ Presbyterian Church, Dr. Donald Gass was also deeply devoted to his family, always endeavoring to remain true to family values of the highest order; he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife of almost 55 years, Margy Ann, and was the proud parent of John Donald Gass, Dr. Carlton Simpson Gass, Dean MacIntyre Gass, and Media Lee Gass Yawn; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gass will not only be missed by his wife and children, but also by his grandchildren Elizabeth and Johanna Gass, Amanda and Danny Yawn and Lindsay Gass, and other members of his extended family; his loss will also be felt by his peers on the Vanderbilt faculty and throughout his field, legions of former students, and his many friends; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Donald Gass leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional healer, author, teacher and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. John Donald McIntyre Gass, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Dr. Gass.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.